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BRASS IN DECORATION.

THE revival of brass, as an ornamental accessory to furniture and the furnishing of our apartments, has already shown itself to be unlike the usual run of fashionable freaks, inasmuch as it promises to be permanent and fixed. Fashion loses her independence when she brings forth a material that has in itself the qualities of usefulness and beauty so strongly developed as they are in brass; fashion would now in vain set her face against its popularity, for it has established itself in public taste and has become now a fixture in our practical arts. No doubt the interest in articles made in the days of our grandfathers has had considerable to do with the modern use of brass, for the bureaux and tables and escretoires of a century ago, of Washington's days and our early independence, were plentifully adorned with shining, gold-like handles, or hinges, or edges, or railings—all wrought in the most delicate manner imaginable, and giving a delightful finish to whatever it was applied.

The labor of turning out these pieces of metal is much greater than its finish would indicate. It passes through a multitude of hands before it finally assumes the shapes and brilliancy familiar to us when we see it in use about us.

The molding clay in which the wooden patterns bearing the design selected is pressed, is a soil very tenacious in its particles and capable of exceedingly hard packing; it is pressed into square boxes, having an iron frame about them, provided with handles at either end to allow carrying. The pattern, leaving its impression in the soil, is then carefully lifted from its place, and the two boxes, each bearing one side of the pattern, are placed together, kept in proper contact by a pin and eye affixed in their respective sides. The molten metal is poured through openings in the boxes, flows over the clay, and, sinking into the hollow left by the pattern, molds itself into the shapes it finds there.

Brass molders are very much inconvenienced

by the scarcity of clay in this country suitable for their use, a great part of that now employed is imported from France.

When the article comes from the mold it is naturally enough rough, ragged, and dirty; the shreds of metal attaching to it are knocked off, the rough edges worked down a little, and the clinging clay is brushed away as much as it is possible to do. Then the article is dipped in the acid bath and it comes forth denuded of any foreign substance which may have been clinging to it, stripped of its dirt and for the first time the purity of the metal's color is shown. From this time onward, it is passing through hands that bring its outlines and ornament nearer to perfection, until it finally finds its way into the polisher's room where the emery wheel (so copious in dust which it throws off as to make it necessary for the workmen to protect their lungs by tying a piece of cloth over their mouth) prepares it for the last touch of the soft cloth which gives it the brilliancy it has when shown upon the counters for sale.

In addition to the numerous furniture fixtures of brass—the inlaid scrolls, the pendant handles, panels, railings—there are multitudes of small objects made for the decoration of the walls and mantels. There is the Cellini shield, and beside it the Dante shield and others without any special distinction; breastplates that might have belonged to some medieval warrior or even to Achilles himself could we judge by the antique evidences clinging to it; helmets with and without

visors, halberts, swords, scimitars, and murderous daggers. Then there are the instruments of peace, the never-failing inkstand, profuse in brass and beauty, with very limited capacity as to ink, there is a candle fixed upon a frame, which attached to the wall may be drawn out to almost any length; other candelabra have a rod in the center as the means of supporting small porcelain shades over each candle; the brass brackets, some of the single shelf only, and others having three shelves a larger one in the center with smaller ones top and bottom, are exceedingly pretty; paper weights appear to be without end in their variety; lizards, crocodiles, canister shot, unmounted howitzers, petite billiard tables, sleeping lions and peaceful eagles are a few of the many, and ash receivers compete with the weights for numbers, of course there is a flattened sun fish, and the more esthetic sardine flattened out for the purpose, half-moons with the profile of a man between the horns, owl's head, a frog that appears to have been trodden on so heavily as to hollow its back, a turtle almost turned inside out, and Gainsborough heads of lovely females. There are bells,

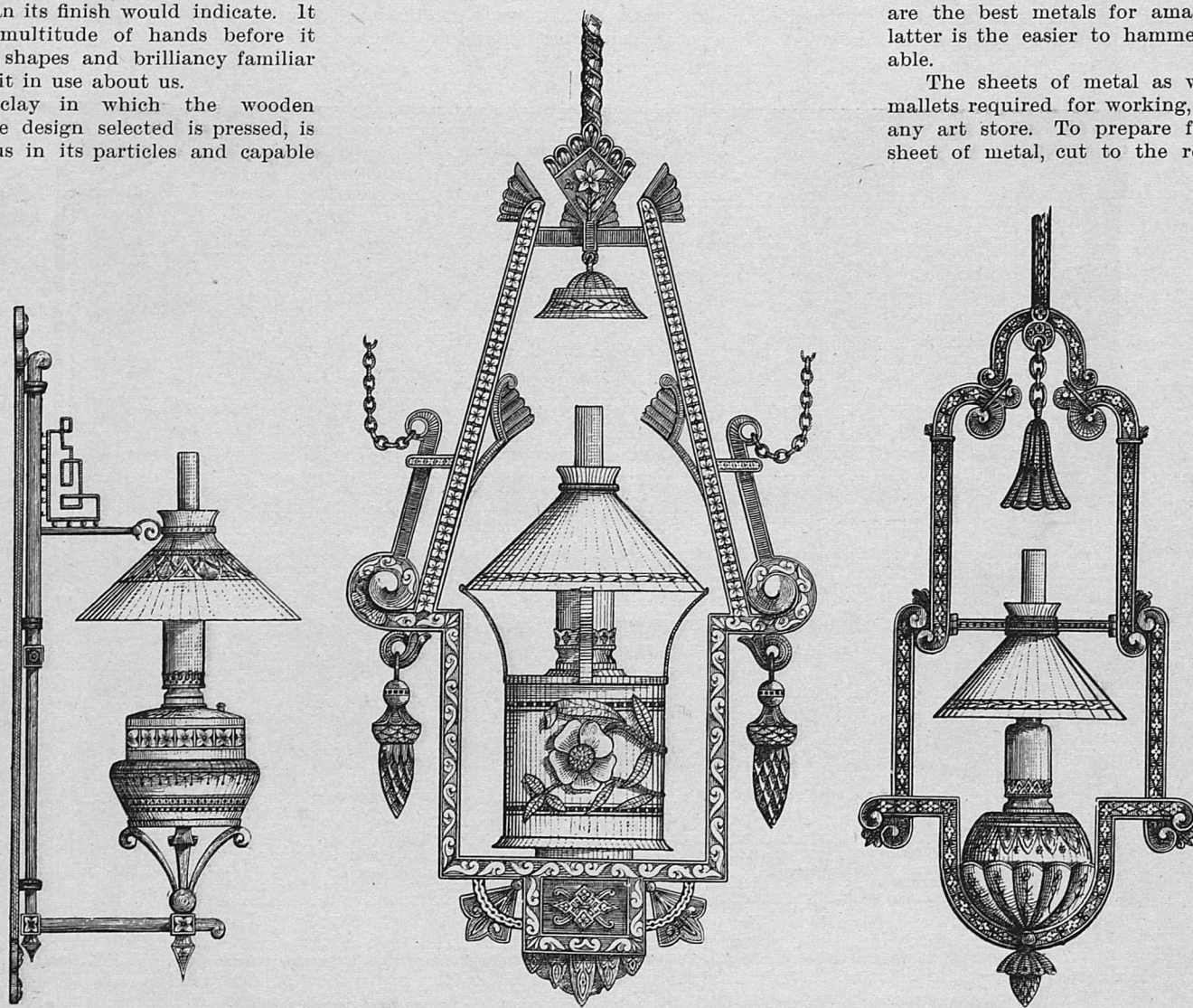
plainer Roman forms. Japanese fire screens having a center of brass netting bearing the customary monstrous celestial dragon spitting flame and generally disporting himself peculiarly.

These are a small part of novelties in brass, they are being brought forth as rapidly as imaginative designers can make them; lamps in particular are reaching a popularity which they must have enjoyed when they were a necessity and had not been thought of as ornamental adjuncts. We give three designs on this page for brass lamps, and they will be found to be very decorative when made up. For the preceding information we are indebted to the kind attention of Mr. John Williams.

Among students and ladies, who have leisure to devote to it, brass has recently become popular through its use in the new repoussé work. When studied as a profession, repoussé work presents the usual severe array of obstacles which delight the persevering, but frighten all others away. Considered as a means of cheap and effective home decoration, it offers a large field of enjoyable work within reach of anyone possessing ordinary taste in art matters. Brass and copper are the best metals for amateur work, and the latter is the easier to hammer, being more malleable.

The sheets of metal as well as the tools and mallets required for working, can be obtained at any art store. To prepare for work, fasten the sheet of metal, cut to the required size, on to a pine board one inch in thickness.

There are two methods of doing this: one is to nail cleats of wood diagonally across the corners or down the sides of the sheet without piercing it, or screw wooden buttons to the corners of the board and turn them around on to the metal after it is laid in position. Both these ways are better than to nail the metal itself to the board, for then no allowance is made for the expansion that occurs with beating. Any one with a knowledge of drawing can sketch in bold, free lines the desired pattern on the face of the sheet to be hammered. Lacking that talent a good



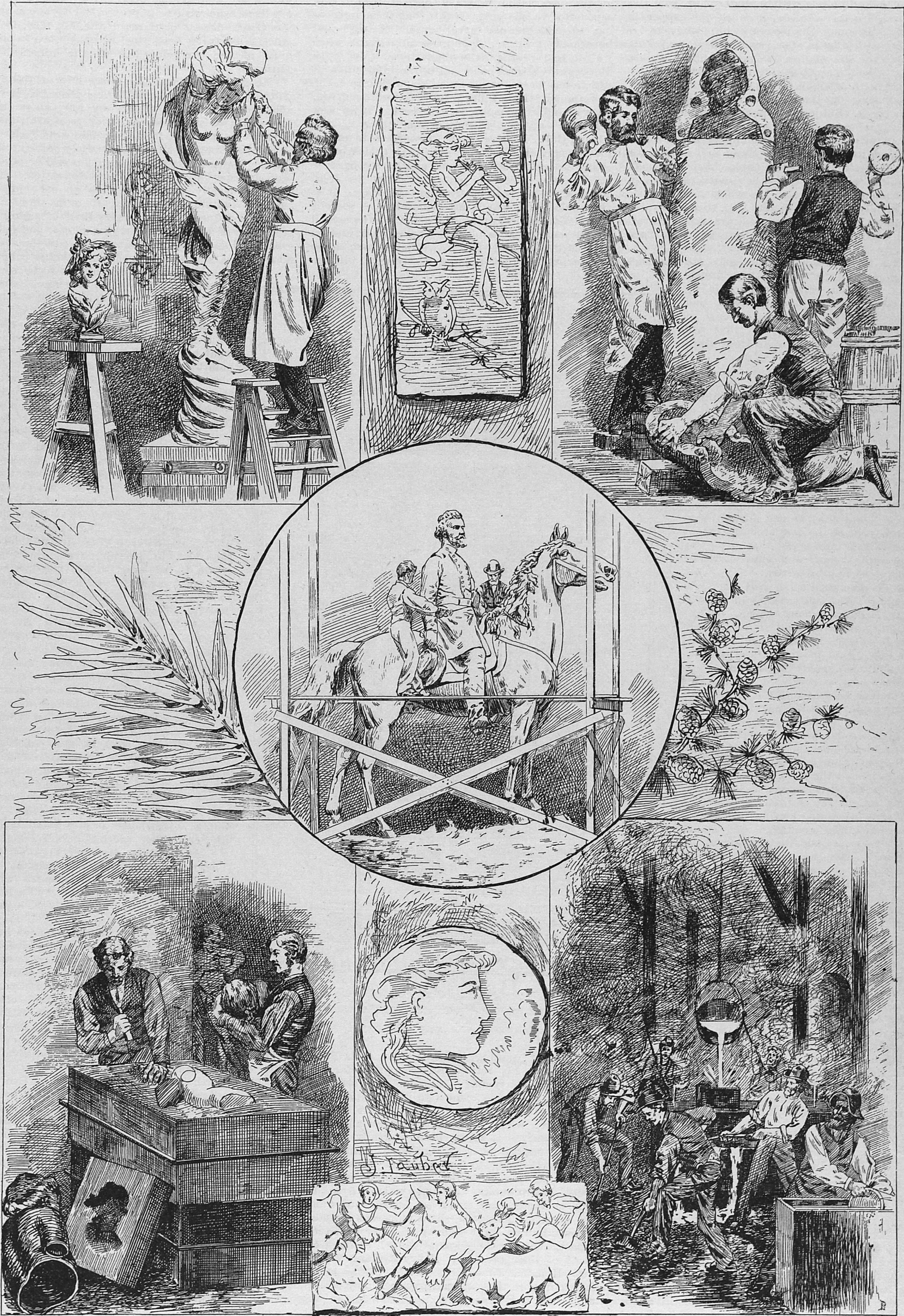
DESIGNS FOR HANGING LAMPS, BY L. W. ELKINS.

all sorts of bells, from the representations of the Bolshoi, Tsar of Moscow, the Great Bell of Pekin to the Great Tom of Oxford, all looking for the world like their originals, excepting in size. Other bells have clocks within them, others still are shaped as a statuette of a lady of the Elizabethan era with an exaggerated ruff and a widespread petticoat; paper cutters have a bar of music upon them, there are quills in metal, swords, and more curious than all a side plan of a Gondola with the keel sharpened for cutting and the Lion of St. Marc as a handle; match stands of a buck and saw for ornament and a barrel standing by for matches; frames for pictures and mirrors worked with all the beauty and grace of the Renaissance; small tables for holding vases or lamps or to act as card tables or for music rooms, are square or round, sustained either by a slender post or by three or four legs, having one shelf or three ornamented or plain, all or any to suit the taste of the purchaser. Toilet tables have a post rising from the center of the shelf, upon which swings a mirror lighted by candles resting in a couple of arms that come out before it. A popular form of stand is the elongated leg of a turkey, the claws being spread so as to give it support. Brass pitchers are popular but expensive, selling for \$100 to \$300 per pair; they are made in showy designs and contain a great amount of work; standing lamps are made in large quantities and sell readily. Lamps perched upon the top of a pedestal or upright, student lamps shaped after the Greek pattern and others after the slightly

use can be made of tracing and transfer paper. After the pattern is traced on the metal, outline it all with a chisel-shaped punch, giving smart taps with a mallet of rolled cowhide or of steel; then hammer the background with fine punches, taking care not to neglect the small spaces around and between the leaves of floral designs. Hammer untiringly, going over the ground repeatedly until the required effect is produced. One of the things best learned by practice is where to begin the hammering, for different styles of work are variously treated.

If the design is a panel with a large central figure like a head, and a high relief is desired, begin at the edges and work in toward the center. This leaves the edges flat and throws all the fullness into the pattern, making the relief much higher. A picture frame, on the other hand, would have the hammering evenly distributed all around and not thrown into the center (for that is to be cut out), or the edges would buckle and bend, and the work would be spoiled. Hammer from both edges toward the design, and go over it all once lightly before attempting to finish any one corner in advance of the rest. The longer the hammering is done, the more beautiful and finished the work. A second outlining of the design may be found necessary when the background is nearly finished.

The veining of leaves is done with the outlining punch after the design is all hammered, and great care must be taken not to strike too hard a blow, or the relief will be depressed. Hair



SKETCHES SHOWING THE PROCESS OF MAKING MOLD AND CASTING BRONZE STATUES. By J. LAUBER.

and lines of shading are treated the same way. Eyes or berries are executed with a special tool which makes a circle with a single blow from the hammer. After a piece of work on copper is finished, it may be greatly improved by a thorough washing in warm soap and water. This removes the dressing on the metal and shows its polish, which may be still further heightened by rubbing with chamois. If the effect of bronze is desired, some one has discovered an easy way of producing it. Subject the panel or frame to the dry heat of an oven for two or three hours, or send it to be fired, and your copper is as bronze.

Panels for doors are one of the best objects for amateur work. An objectionable closet door may be grained and each panel covered with a design in hammered copper, and the whole room will be wonderfully improved thereby. If that seems like too much work, then only the transverse central panel need be covered with the hammered ornament.

The brown bronze colors and other shades foreign to the natural tint of bronze metal, brass or copper, are given by dyes used by the manufacturers, and often when two articles are made of the same color the effect of time will produce such changes as to show them entirely different.

Possibly the most extensive work to which brass and bronze are applied is the casting of statues, and this, while it is largest, is in reality as delicate as anything can well be; it requires the most constant care, and the slightest lack of attention leads often to the most disastrous results. We show upon page 175 a series of illustrations of Mr. Lauber, giving the different stages in casting a bronze statue; it is instructive, and conveys a slight idea of the difficulties to be met. One of the best accounts extant of casting a statue is that given by Benvenuto Cellini, and thus described by a recent English writer:

"This eminent man had been engaged upon his fine group of Perseus and Medusa, during which, by the jealousy of rivals and ill conduct of his workmen, he had been subjected to every kind of annoyance and disappointment. At length his labors seemed to be nearly at an end, his mold was lowered into the pit, the furnace heated, and the metal thrown in. At this time, while a violent storm raged without, the roof of his study, as if to increase the confusion, caught fire, but though ill and harassed he still directed the work and encouraged his assistants, till overcome by anxiety and fatigue he retired in a raging fever to lie down, leaving instructions respecting the opening of the mouth of the furnace and the running of the bronze. He had not been reposing very long before one came running to him to announce evil tidings; the metal was melted but would not run. He jumped from his bed, rushed to his studio like a madman and threatened the lives of his assistants, who, being frightened got out of his way, till one of them to appease him, desired him to give his orders and they would obey him at all risks. He commanded fresh fuel to be thrown into the furnace, and, presently, to his satisfaction, the metal began to boil. Again, however, it appeared thick and sluggish and refused to run. He then ordered all the plates, dishes, and other articles of domestic use in his house to be brought to him which he threw pell-mell on the metal, when it immediately became fluid and the mold was soon filled."

DECORATIVE ART IN LONDON.

By HENRY B. WHEATLEY.

ALTHOUGH many objects of interest have come down to us from ancient days, we scarcely expect to see many relics of domestic furniture saved from the ravages of time. All the more interesting therefore is it when such an object is brought to our notice. An ancient bronze chair, almost entire, which has been lately discovered in Egypt, is now at the British Museum, having been given to that institution by its possessor. The chair belongs to the period of the Roman influence over Egypt, and some imaginative person has suggested

that it was once sat in by Anthony when he feasted with Cleopatra. I do not know whether another association which I have to record is of as shadowy a character as this, but it is interesting to connect one great dramatist with our household furniture. I suppose all is right when we are told that a little four-flapped table with Shakespeare's arms and initials carved upon it which has been found at a Warwickshire farmhouse about three miles from Stratford, on Avon, once actually belonged to the poet. It is now exhibited at the Shakespearian Show at the Albert Hall. Passing from the master to one of his interpreters, I would note that a most interesting ornament was lately sold at Messrs. Christies. It was the piece of plate presented to John Kemble on his retirement from the stage. It is three-sided and stands 26 inches high. On one side is Tragedy crowning the actor, on the second Cupid pointing to a bust of Shakespeare, and on the third the following inscription which is so well expressed that I hope my readers will ex-

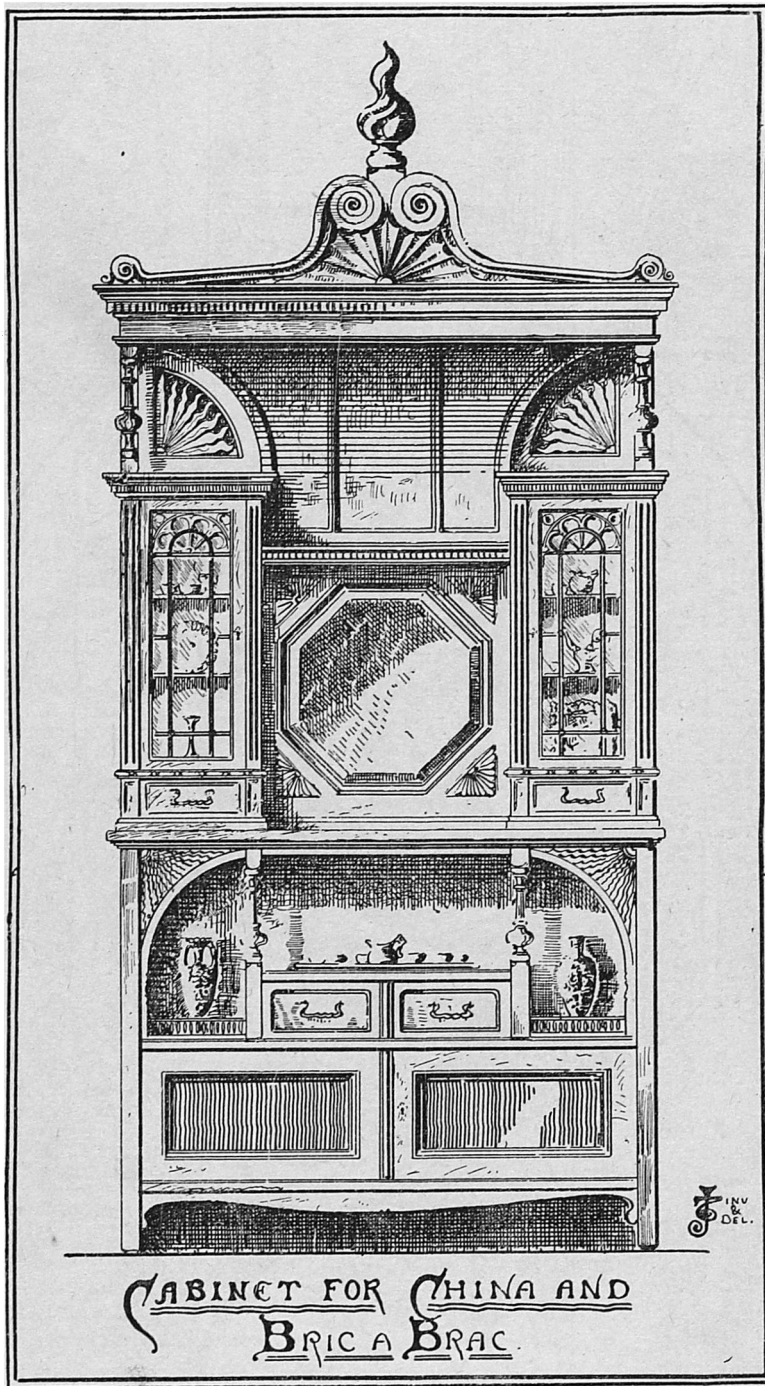
have opened an artistic and Historic Costume Studio, where a variety of dresses can be viewed, not on lay figures, but upon living young ladies; and those who wish to improve their style can see how Greek dresses or those of the 5th, 12th, 16th and 17th centuries look when actually worn in the midst of the every-day life of the nineteenth century.

Messrs. Howell and James are now exhibiting at their fine rooms in Waterloo Place, a large collection of painted pottery by lady amateurs. There is a considerable variety of treatment, and as might be expected from the widespread fashion of plate-painting, an equal variety of merit. When plaques are painted with flowers, or other subjects specially suitable for decoration, the result is usually good, but when an attempt is made to imitate oil painting, there is very frequently a failure. One soon gets tired of seeing a succession of portraits painted on plates, and it is even possible to see too many reproductions of Miss Mary Anderson's pretty face. Another collection of paintings on china is to be seen at the Studios of Mediæval and Industrial Art in New Bond Street. The number of pieces are fewer than at Messrs. Howell & James's, and in consequence the level of excellence is somewhat higher. The general tone of the paintings is good, and most of the plaques would harmonize well with their surroundings in a tastefully arranged room. Some very charming pieces of tapestry painting and fan painting are also shown in this gallery.

A few months ago I alluded to the use that had been made of Bartolozzi prints for the purpose of decorating furniture. Messrs. Henry & John Cooper have carried out this idea with great success and in a different way from that previously noticed. They possess some of the original copper plates and have succeeded in printing from these on cream tinted satin, in the fine lustrous red and warm brown of the original impressions with a result of singular beauty. They have fitted up a large room showing the application of the engravings to the ornamentation of walls, doors, chimney pieces, movable furniture, etc., each portion being studied with a view to a harmonious effect of color and blending of the engraving with its structural surroundings, in such a manner as to preserve a unity of idea and to establish its fitness for the position. When placed in the panels of mahogany doors, in screens, and over mantels, the effect is particularly good. Of course these pictures would not be suitable in the case of furniture with a very florid or highly raised carving; but as here shown in the fluted moldings and other carving in low relief of the Adam style, are very appropriate. There is a mahogany mantelpiece in free Louis XV. style, ornamented with a fine medallion of "Clytie" and a long panel of "Nature," which is a highly successful example of this system of decoration. Some of these engravings have been printed on satin with a margin left free for embroidery, which can be added according to the taste of the worker, for the purpose of decorating screens, piano fortes, and other pieces of furniture. The designs of Bartolozzi and his school adapt themselves remarkably well to this form of ornamentation, for they are essentially decorative in their elegance and prettiness.

The Fourth Annual Furniture Trades Exhibition at the Agricultural Hall, has materially much in common with those already held at the same place, but there are distinctive features which give it a special interest. Messrs. Cardinal and Harford, the carpet importers, show a fine specimen of the Khorassan antique carpet which must have taken years to manufacture, it being computed to contain nearly three and a half million knots (196 to each square inch), each knot being tied separately by hand. The furniture generally shows an improvement in taste. There is less of the outré and more of the tasteful than I have previously noticed. We seem to be getting out of that mere imitation of the work of the furniture makers of a past age, which produced so much which was quite inappropriate to our present surroundings.

The Exhibition of Works in Wood, which is now being held at Carpenters' Hall is of considerable interest, and it is to be hoped that many workmen will visit it. Not only the things



DESIGNED BY JAMES THOMSON.

cuse me for quoting it here: "To John Philip Kemble, on his retirement from the stage, of which for thirty-four years he has been the ornament and pride; which to his learning, taste, and genius is indebted for its present state of refinement; which under his auspices and aided by his unrivaled labors most worthily devoted to the support of the legitimate drama, and more particularly to the glory of Shakespeare, has attained to a degree of splendor and propriety before unknown, and which, from his high character, has acquired increase of honor and dignity. This vase—by a numerous assembly of his admirers, in testimony of their gratitude, respect, and affection—was presented through the hands of their president, Henry Richard Vassall, Lord Holland, June 27th, 1817." "More is thy due than more than all can pay." I may remark in passing that this letter is written in the very room that Kemble used for many years as his study.

Messrs. Liberty have taken up the idea of adapting ancient costumes to modern requirements, and with the help of Mr. E. W. Godwin,